

***City of St Charles***

***Cultural Commission Meeting***

***June 23, 2014***

***Century Station Training Room***

***5:00 PM***

Call to Order at 5:08 PM

Present: Anne Becker, Catie Barron, Kathy Melone, Jodi Manthei, Jamie DeBeir, Charles Brown, Guy Bellaver, Stu Ainsworth, Jim Collins

Also Present: Chris Minick, City of St. Charles; Carylie Forte, City of St. Charles; Mark Koenen, City of St. Charles

Anne Becker opened the meeting and Chris Minick announced the order of Agenda items with time for Public Comment after the Minutes from June 2 were to be approved. Guy Bellaver said that he disagreed with the Minutes from June 2, as written, where it pertains to the paragraph on the St. Charles Arts Council, and where it was noted that controls need to be in place to limit invitations to frequent participants under the Charlie Event. Becker asked that the discussion on approving the Minutes be tabled to the end of the meeting.

At 5:19pm, Donna Steele of Steel Beam Theatre spoke to the group and said that for the arts to survive in downtown St. Charles, funding must survive. She spoke about the difficulties of affording rent and that Lookingglass Theatre in Chicago only pays the City of Chicago \$1.00 for rental of the old Water Tower site.

The funding allocation discussion began:

Chris Minick asked if there were any groups that the commission did not wish to fund. Guy Bellaver mentioned he thought that STC Underground could find their funding from the St. Charles Parks Foundation. Jodi Manthei concurred with that and said she had followed up with a phone call to the Underground's rep and asked if they could address their needs with the Foundation, rather than via the VCC. She would like to see them get the materials they need though.

Norris Cultural Arts Center did not receive funding last year, and Bellaver thought that part of their request would go toward salaries (is this accurate?).

Fox Valley Repertory (FVR)– Stu Ainsworth said he would suggest not giving them any money, as he thought their actors come from Chicago, and that they may have issues with even being around in a year, due to financial problems the past year. Also, they had not submitted a current 990 form. Chris Minick said that if it was the VCC desire, they could award to a group

that has not submitted a 990 form, and hold disbursement until a 990 form had been submitted. Bellaver said that it wasn't relevant because the VCC would not meet again anyway to discuss when an organization submits their 990 later in that Fiscal Year period. Becker asked Ainsworth to clarify his position re: funds for FVR. Does he not want to give them funding because they did not submit a 990 form, or because they are not financially stable. Ainsworth said that the 990 would verify the probability of their financial stability; if you study their 990 it would support his contention that they are in difficult financial times and could result in them no longer being able to survive, so giving them any money would seem to him, a waste of funds. Minick said FVR submitted a budget with their application and it shows they project a net loss of \$58,000. Ainsworth commented they are the only organization that expected to lose money.

Becker stated she was personally uncomfortable with not funding FVR at all. After all these years of them performing in the Pheasant Run complex, and as a part of the City's cultural fiber, it would not make sense NOT to fund them. And, there is no data she is aware of that substantiates Ainsworth's statement that they use only actors who are from Chicago. Manthei asked if that was even relevant to these local organizations. She re-stated aloud the mission statement of the VCC and added that the organizations do not have to be born and bred within St. Charles.

Becker suggested they move on with defining allocation numbers to each organization. She mentioned that she had provided one of the suggested allocation columns in the exercise on the screen, and said she looked at the Norris Cultural Arts Center and how they compared with the needs of the other organizations. She felt comfortable giving them money, but staying true to the amounts that had been allocated in the past to the other organizations. Remember, the VCC budget has not changed, and the proposals that were submitted were more than \$100,000 over what the budget even allows (\$89,400).

That was her starting point in making allocation judgments. Jodi agreed with this strategy, and she had also provided her suggested allocation numbers. Norris has been very flexible with the VCC when money has been tight and they have stepped back during those times, and now are asking for some money, so wanted to include them in some kind of support this year. Melone asked if they should start with 5K, half of the 10K they requested.

Melone noted that with Preservation Partners, last year we had extra money to give them, and that with them asking the same amount this year, she suggested reducing their request to \$9K (asking for \$10,750).

St. Charles Singers was discussed and they have also gotten more in the past years than other orgs (they had a European tour one year). So Kathy wanted to mention that. In looking at the %, for them to get 16% of the budget is more than all the others. She would decrease their funding slightly to \$12,500.

Water Street Studios gets a smaller percentage of the overall budget, not having had a lot of history yet with the VCC. Chris mentioned that last year was the first year they were funded and to use that as the rationale in moving forward.

STC Underground – Melone posed the question - shouldn't they be going to the St. Charles Park Foundation for their funding? Bellaver made a Motion to eliminate STC Underground from any funding by the VCC this year. Melone asked if they should tell STC Underground up front that if they want funding from the VCC, they need to ask the St. Charles Parks Foundation to ask the VCC for them, like the Sculpture in the Park asks for money from the VCC. We should give them some direction on this.

MOTION by Bellaver, seconded by Barron to remove STC Underground from the VCC funding allocation process.

Roll Call Vote – AYE: Becker, Barron, Melone, Manthei, DeBeir, Bellaver, Ainsworth, Brown, Collins

NAY: 0

Motion Carried

\*Melone wanted to make note that they would like to express to the STC Underground that the VCC wants to support them, but feels that it should be given to the St. Charles Parks Foundation for them to allocate to the STC Underground. Minick suggested this notice be given via email or phone call to the STC Underground rep.

Discussion went back to FVR: Becker suggested that based on what they presented on June 2, she thinks they will still be around and that she suggests \$8325.00 in funding.

Fox Valley Concert Band – They asked for 10K this year. Last year they received \$7150.00. At this point, Bellaver asked if they were discussing the organizations “out of order” on the Allocation List so that they could then go back to see how much they would be giving to Norris Cultural Arts Center (NCAC). That was the idea, they agreed. Becker tried to allocate on her sheet to as close to what was given to each org. last year, and then determine how much could be allocated to NCAC. Bellaver talked about their members willingly taking on a personal cost to being members of the group, so he argued that the VCC should cut them to 5K this year (they were asking for \$7150). He is trying to come up with some extra money. Melone countered at \$5800.00. Becker said they do many of their concerts for free in St. Charles, they're professional musicians, and why would we penalize them for that. Barron asked if they will benefit from using the NCAC's Gallery for some of their concerts? Does that allow for VCC to reduce their funding? Bellaver added that in the past, it has cost the NCAC \$700.00 to present Fox Valley Concert Band in performance, and they pay them only \$500.00 per appearance at their venue. So the answer for the NCAC is to have the Band use the Gallery so that it becomes more cost effective for them to present in this venue. These concerts are free, so Manthei said that to support them is supporting the idea that families can attend concerts without having to dip into their wallets. Melone suggested that they allocate \$5800 for the time being and see where everyone ends up. Bellaver agreed with this.

Steel Beam Theatre – they are asking for \$50K, and last year they received \$12,250.00. Bellaver suggested starting at 11K. Ainsworth commented that whatever he said about Fox Valley Repertory, he feels that the opposite is true for Steel Beam. The majority of their actors come from the Fox Valley region (not Chicago), and they present quality material. The limitations of the size of their theatre prevents them from achieving high sales figures (with fewer seats). Their children’s programs have grown and the “increase in salary at this organization is to help further support children’s theatre.” But the 50K is a little overstated. Melone said that discussing where the artists come from is not part of their discussion and has no bearing with any of these organizations. Ainsworth said he would transfer the money slated for Fox Valley Repertory to Steel Beam.

Becker read from #4 (describe how the funding will be allocated in the next FY) of Steel Beam’s Application. Their response was as follows:

15K to help produce 6 mainstage shows per year

10K to produce annual KCScaregrounds Haunted House

10K to staff, market and launch new social awareness comedy Improv program for students

15K for rent subsidy to remain in current Main Street location.

Melone said she agreed that the more we can do to keep a theatre downtown is important, but the problem is that the VCC doesn’t have that kind of money. She would like to see a little more there.

Ainsworth – the rent keeps going up in that location. Becker asked what his suggestion is then. He would like to see them get a minimum of 15K.

Manthei likes the idea of supporting Steel Beam as well, but along with Fox Valley Rep, the VCC has supported both to a greater extent than other organizations, so they have shown a great level of local support, to the degree that they could. It was decided to start at \$12K.

Becker asked a question: we had some concerns in the past about requests for room build outs and additions, etc., and the response is that the VCC does not fund bricks and mortar requests. As it reads on paper, should the high rental amount be a consideration in the allocation?

Bellaver said that that should not be a concern of the VCC. It’s another figure to make it sound like they really need the money. If they cannot afford the rent, then they cannot afford to be there, as happened to the Norris Cultural Arts Center. They have a high salary base, and could put some of that toward their expenses.

Fine Line Creative Arts – asking for \$10,500. Becker suggested starting at \$8325.00. Manthei said that they’ve used the past monies well and took marketing suggestions from the VCC that have grown their business.

Sculpture in the Park – most of the money goes toward bringing in more artists, so they try to increase that aspect of what they try to achieve each year. Started at 5K.

St. Charles Arts Council – asking for 37K, last year received \$15,250. They receive a large portion of the budget. Started their allocation at 12K.

Water Street Studios – the Suburban Arts Conference they hosted last year was a great success so they wish to host that again in 2014-15. They have the Print Lab as well and want to expand their capabilities and classes, as well as getting a new press machine. Suggested amount given at \$4,750.00.

At that point the total allocated was at \$82,950.00 and it was asked, how should they disseminate the remaining \$6450.00?

There was a discussion of which organizations were based in St. Charles, and which were not, as a way of increasing/decreasing funding. Then they looked at increasing the numbers of the organizations that had percentages lower than 7% of the whole.

The following allocations were suggested for approval:

Fox Valley Repertory	\$8,325.00
St. Charles Singers	\$12,500.00
Preservation Partners	\$9,000.00
Norris Cultural Arts Center	\$7,000.00
Fox Valley Concert Band	\$5,800.00
Steel Beam Theatre	\$14,000.00
Fine Line Creative Arts Center	\$8,325.00
Sculpture in the Park	\$6,000.00
St. Charles Arts Council	\$12,700.00
Water Street Studios	\$5,750.00
STC Underground	\$0

Motion by Anne Becker, seconded by Catie Barron to approve the Allocation Funding.

Roll Call Vote: AYE: Becker, Barron, Melone, Manthei, DeBier, Brown, Bellaver, Ainsworth, Collins

NAY: 0

Motion Carried

Becker asked Minick about the money that the City is getting from the Hotel/Motel Tax. And since the entire funding for the VCC comes from this tax revenue, she wanted to know if those amounts were returning to what they were before Andersen Consulting left the City. Minick stated that those funds are down this year. Minick put up a graph/slide of the Net Hotel/Motel Taxes from 2005 through 2013, showing the fluctuating during this period. From 2005-2008 it had gone up consistently, and then during the economic downturn it bottomed out, and from then until present, has gone up and down. Hotel Baker and the Q Center are excluded from this tax revenue.

Becker clarified her question regarding the St. Charles Arts Council and where repeat artist organizations could benefit by becoming a 501(c)(3) and could then ask the VCC for funding directly, rather than falling under the umbrella of support from the SCAC, and, as she

understands it, their concept of supporting all the smaller artistic organizations who may come for just one year or two years, and don't have the kind of situation where they would be coming back year after year to St. Charles Arts Council for financial support. Melone thought it was an appropriate question and an appropriate answer.

Bellaver disagreed with the wording as it appears in the Minutes. He contends that by having this appear in the SCAC paragraph, this conversation appears to pertain only to the SCAC. He does not want it reflected that way in the Minutes. It was suggested that the sentence could be deleted from the Minutes.

Motion by Bellaver, seconded by Ainsworth to amend the Minutes by striking the sentence, *"Controls need to be in place to limit the invitations to one or two-timer orgs under the Charlie Event"* and also to correct the spelling of Fine Line Creative Arts Center's President as Ellen Ljung (not Ellen Young).

VOICE VOTE                      UNANIMOUS                      MOTION CARRIED

Motion by Ainsworth, seconded by DeBier to approve the Minutes from the June 2 meeting, as amended:

VOICE VOTE                      UNANIMOUS                      MOTION CARRIED

Motion by Melone, seconded by DeBier to adjourn the meeting.

VOICE VOTE                      UNANIMOUS                      MOTION CARRIED

Meeting adjourned at 7:02 PM.

Minutes prepared by Carylle Forte